(b) whether the Summit finalized the Free Trade Agreement;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the meet was also attended by Foreign and Trade Ministers and officials; and

(e) if so, what understandings or agreements were reached there?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes. The Prime Minister attended the First Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit in Bangkok on 31 July, 2004.

(b) and (c) No such agreement was finalized at the First Summit. However, the BIMSTEC Framework Agreement on Free Trade Area was signed during the Sixth Ministerial Meeting in Phuket, Thailand in February, 2004 by Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Bangladesh joined the Agreement in June, 2004. The Framework Agreement provides a roadmap for Free Trade Area in goods, services, investment and other areas of general economic cooperation.

(d) The Summit was preceded by meetings of Senior Officials and Foreign Ministers on July 29 and 30, 2004 respectively.

(e) The BIMSTEC leaders signed the BIMSTEC Summit Declaration to promote cooperation, *inter alia*, in trade and investment, transport and communications, tourism, energy, human resources development, agriculture, fisheries, and science and technology.

Dispute Resolution Mechanism between SAARC Countries

755. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the recent SAARC Foreign Ministers' meet, Pakistan had suggested the constitution of a Dispute Resolution Mechanism for settlement of mutual disputes amongst member countries;

(b) if so, the precise suggestion made by Pakistan; and

(c) what consensus was reached in this regard and what was the Indian stand in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, sir.

(b) and (c) Questions do not arise.

Social Security Scheme for workers

756. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI:
SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken to review the social security scheme for workers in the unorganised sector launched in January, 2004;

(b) if so, the details and the statutory backing provided or proposed to be provided to the scheme;

(c) if so, the details of the workers in the unorganised sectors, State-wise, category-wise as on today; and

(d) if so, the details including the number of workers, amount spent on the scheme introduced in 50 districts, district-wise, category-wise as on today?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) to (d) The Government launched the Unorganised Sector Workers' Social Security Scheme, 2004. The benefits included health insurance, personal accident insurance cover and old age pension. About 3500 unorganised workers have been covered under the scheme. State-wise details are enclosed as Statement (*See* below). Category-wise details are not available. The Government of India contribution towards the scheme was Rs. one lakh for the year 2003-04. The scheme was not found viable and therefore it is being reworked. One of he reasons was that it lacked statutory backing. Therefore, the Government is working to enact 'Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, 2004' to provide for among other things social security measures having statutory backing for the unorganised sector workers in the country.